



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Carbon Monoxide

What is it?

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a gas that you cannot see or smell. It is produced whenever something is burned incompletely or when something is burned in a closed-in area. It is toxic to all humans and animals. It is also the most commonly inhaled poisonous substance and is a common indoor air pollutant.

Where can it be formed in and around the house?

- An incorrectly adjusted or vented furnace that can spread carbon monoxide throughout the house
- Gas water heaters with improperly aligned or obstructed exhaust pipes
- Gas stoves that are left on for long periods of time or used as heaters
- Fireplaces that are blocked by debris
- Wood stoves
- Gas or kerosene space heaters that are used in unvented rooms
- Charcoal grills that are used inside as heaters or in garages or unvented areas
- Automobiles that are allowed to idle in closed garages

What are the health effects of over-exposure to carbon monoxide?

- Headaches
- Sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Death

What are symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Severe headache
- Confusion about surroundings
- Sleepiness
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Fainting

Sometimes, people with these symptoms think they are getting the flu.

What can you do to protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning where you live?

- Install carbon monoxide detectors to detect the presence of high levels of carbon monoxide in your home.
- Never use gas or kerosene space heaters or gas stoves in unvented rooms.
- Never use gas stoves or charcoal grills inside as heaters.
- Never stay in a closed garage with a car that is running.
- Check fuel-burning appliances such as water heaters, clothes dryer, and furnace connections to make sure they are operating correctly, and have a professional check the fireplace once a year.

For more information on carbon monoxide, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/coftsht.html>



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